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U.S. Launches Effort to Detect Terrorist Shipments of Nuclear and Radioactive Material

Equipment Will Help Stop Attempts to Smuggle Components for Nuclear Weapons and "Dirty Bombs"

VILNIUS, LITHUANIA -- The U.S. and Lithuanian governments today announced the two countries will work together in the war on terrorism by installing special equipment at the Vilnius Airport to detect hidden shipments of nuclear and other radioactive material.

This is part of a new effort to extend to international airports the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) successful "Megaports" program that installs sophisticated detection equipment at many of the world's seaports. The Megaports program was announced by Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham last August in Rotterdam

NNSA Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation Paul Longsworth, U.S. Ambassador Stephen D. Mull, Lithuanian ministers and other senior officials today commissioned the radiation detection program. For the past two years, U.S. technical experts have worked with Lithuania, Vilnius Airport staff, and Lithuanian private industry to install radiation detection systems that will assist in detection, deterrence, and interdiction of illicitly- trafficked nuclear and other radioactive materials.

"We are continuing to address terrorist threats around the globe. Through this program at airports such as Vilnius, and through other NNSA nonproliferation programs, we are helping to stop terrorists and criminals from smuggling nuclear and radiological material," NNSA Administrator Linton F. Brooks said. "Lithuania is a close partner in the important global war on terrorism and proliferation and I look forward to continuing to work with them."

NNSA's Office of the Second Line of Defense (SLD) provides these detection systems worldwide in order to minimize the risk of nuclear proliferation and terrorism through detection and deterrence of illicit trafficking at international borders. SLD installs radiation detection equipment at strategic locations, and provides training in detection, identification, and interdiction of nuclear and radiological materials, as well as training in the operations and maintenance of the equipment.

The specialized radiation-detection technology is part of the overall U.S. nuclear security program to guard against proliferation of weapons materials. It directly supports the Bush Administration's priorities of combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency of the Department of Energy. It enhances U.S. national security through the military application of nuclear energy, maintains the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, promotes international nuclear nonproliferation and safety, reduces global danger from weapons of mass destruction, provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion, and oversees its national laboratories to maintain U.S. leadership in science and technology.

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